UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.183/SR.185
31 January 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 185th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 15 January 1992, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI (Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

CONTENTS

Adoption of the agenda

Election of officers

Organization of work

United Nations Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, Nicosia, 20-24 January 1992

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.183/1992/L.1)

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. Mr. GHAREKHAN (India) said that, at a time when profound changes were taking place in the international situation, the Committee must redouble its efforts to enable the long-suffering Palestinian people to secure its inalienable rights. With that in view, the Committee needed energetic and dynamic officers and he therefore proposed that Mr. Cisse (Senegal) should be elected Chairman, that Mr. Alarcón de Quesada (Cuba) and Mr. Basharmal (Afghanistan) should be re-elected Vice-Chairmen and that Mr. Camilleri (Malta) should be re-elected Rapporteur.

3. Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) seconded the nominations put forward by the representative of India.

4. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect the officers named by the representative of India.

5. It was so decided.

6. Mr. Cissé (Senegal) took the Chair.

7. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the Committee was continuing to play a major role in the efforts of the United Nations to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

8. He congratulated the Chairman on his election, which was a tribute to the extensive role played for many years by Senegal in the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East as well as an expression of the Committee's confidence in his ability to provide wise and dynamic leadership. He also wished to congratulate the representatives of Cuba and Afghanistan on their re-election as Vice-Chairmen and the representative of Malta on his re-election as Rapporteur.

9. He himself attached the utmost importance to the search for an overall solution to the Middle East conflict that would enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights in accordance with the general principles of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations. The Committee was resuming its work with a renewed mandate approved by the vast majority of the Member States, in the context of continuing international efforts.

(The Secretary-General)

10. There was broad agreement within the international community that the settlement of the question of Palestine should be based on the following elements: the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian territories and other Arab territories occupied since June 1967; acknowledgement of and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries; and lastly, recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, the question of Jerusalem being of central importance in that connection.

11. He had followed with keen interest the intense and often laborious diplomatic efforts undertaken during 1991, which in the autumn had culminated in the historic decision by the parties to come to the negotiating table with the aim of reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement through two parallel direct negotiations processes, on the one hand between Israel and the Arab States and, on the other, between Israel and the Palestinians, as spelled out in the letter of invitation to the Madrid Conference.

12. It should be stressed, in that connection, that although the negotiations were taking place outside the United Nations they enjoyed the support of all the parties concerned and were based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which had long been recognized as the cornerstones of an overall settlement.

13. At its forty-sixth session, in adopting resolution 46/75 the General Assembly had welcomed the convening of the Peace Conference in Madrid on 30 October 1991 as "a significant step towards the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region", and had requested him to continue his efforts with the parties concerned, and in consultation with the Security Council, for the promotion of peace in the region. It was his earnest hope that the momentum that had been generated by the Madrid talks and the more recent rounds of bilateral negotiations in Washington would be sustained and that the lasting peace that had so long been denied to all the peoples of the Middle East would indeed become a reality. For his part, he would do all that he could to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to him in that regard by the United Nations.

14. Pending the achievement of a settlement, however, it was of the greatest importance to find ways by which to promote the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians living under occupation, as his predecessor had stressed in the reports submitted to the Security Council since the beginning of the intifadah, which had now entered its fifth year.

15. In numerous resolutions, the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, had expressed the consensus of the international community with regard to the legal obligations of Israel, as the occupying Power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention and had called for the implementation of its provisions. In its resolution 726 (1992), adopted unanimously the previous

(The Secretary-General)

week, the Security Council had forcefully reaffirmed that position and strongly condemned Israel's decision to resume deportations of Palestinian civilians. The fact that talks were going on between the parties, and outside the United Nations framework, did not detract in any way from Israel's obligations to respect the Convention and abide by the Security Council resolutions.

16. Before concluding, he would like to commend the Committee for its tireless efforts, thanks to which the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people were now better understood and supported. He extended his full support to the Committee in all its endeavours to promote international efforts so as to enable the Palestinian people to gain its legitimate rights, which had been recognized and reaffirmed by the General Assembly.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that his election represented an honour for his country, which would continue to strive for a just solution to the question of Palestine. Given recent developments, the Committee must be increasingly vigilant and its support would be vital during the negotiations in progress. If the parties had finally come to the negotiating table, that achievement had been due in part to the Committee's tireless and unremitting efforts over many years. Now more than ever the Committee must redouble its efforts to ensure that the hopes raised by the series of negotiations initiated by the Madrid Peace Conference were not disappointed.

18. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) remained the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and he wished to reaffirm that the efforts of President Yasser Arafat and the other members of the PLO Executive Committee inspired great confidence.

19. He also wished to convey to the Secretary-General the gratitude of his predecessor, Mrs. Diallo, for her valuable assistance and cooperation during her term of office as Chairman of the Committee. Moreover, he thanked the Secretary-General for attending the Committee's first meeting of the year, thereby demonstrating his personal interest in the question of Palestine and his concern that a solution should be found rapidly. He also wished to thank the members of the Committee secretariat for their hard work and dedication, without which the successes achieved by the Committee would not have been possible.

20. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the presence of the Secretary-General at the Committee's first meeting of the year was an indication of his interest in the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East in general, and in the work of the Committee.

21. In the new international order, special efforts were being made to achieve peace; the PLO welcomed those efforts and had agreed to participate in them. Those developments necessitated a redoubling of the Committee's efforts

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

in support of the rights of the Palestinian people with a view to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. The core of the matter was the question of Palestine.

22. His delegation had taken note with great appreciation of the Secretary-General's statement; it noted his reference to the need for a just and lasting settlement and to the special importance of the question of Jerusalem, as well as his commitment to increasing the role of the United Nations in the peace process and to protecting the Palestinian people during that process in accordance with international law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention and resolutions of the Security Council. His delegation confirmed its readiness to cooperate very closely with the Secretary-General to achieve progress in the Middle East and bring about a comprehensive peace in the region. He expressed appreciation to all friendly countries for their efforts in support of the question of Palestine and the rights of the Palestinian people.

23. Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukraine) said that the Committee's main task in the forthcoming year should be to seek new forms of activity under the new conditions that prevailed and to determine how the United Nations as a whole, and the Committee in particular, could contribute to the successful development of the negotiating process between Israel and the Arab countries, which had been initiated at the Madrid Conference on the Middle East. His delegation was prepared to cooperate closely with the parties directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict and with all States that were concerned about a rapid settlement of the problem. The leadership of independent Ukraine would pay even more attention to the question of Palestine than in the past and would make every effort to ensure that the rights of the Palestinian people were duly observed. Ukraine was actively raising those questions in its contacts with Israel, with which it had recently established full diplomatic relations. It hoped to establish diplomatic relations with Israel's Arab neighbours as well in the near future.

24. His delegation believed that the bilateral talks held in Washington in December 1991 and the direct talks between Israeli and Palestinian delegations begun on 13 January 1992 would be a decisive step on the difficult road to a solution to the Middle East situation. It called on the participants to show maximum restraint and constructiveness in maintaining a favourable political and psychological atmosphere and preventing unnecessary complications. It was important that the United Nations, which was effectively participating in the efforts to restore peace in many parts of the world, should play a part in the peace process. That process had been initiated on the basis of United Nations resolutions, United Nations principles and the United Nations Charter.

(Mr. Oudovenko, Ukraine)

25. The significance of the United Nations had been confirmed by Security Council resolution 726 (1992), which strongly condemned the decision of Israel to deport 12 Palestinian civilians from the occupied Palestinian territories. It was important not to allow that action to have adverse consequences for the Arab-Israeli talks; it was to be hoped that the resolution would help create a favourable atmosphere for continuing the negotiating process. A reduction of tension in the West Bank and Gaza would be in the interests of all sides involved in the peace process, including Israel, and would open up even broader possibilities for intensifying the dialogue between the Arabs and Israel on the substance of other aspects of a Middle East settlement.

26. The Secretary-General withdrew.

27. Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia) said that the statement by the Secretary-General demonstrated the Secretary-General's personal interest in the problems of the Palestinian people and his recognition of the need to accord priority to the question of Palestine.

28. Tunisia hoped that, as the Committee began a new year of work it would continue the same course of supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and trying to solve a problem which was an affront to humanity. The Palestinians were a despoiled and displaced people who wanted to live in peace and security. United Nations interest in the problem reflected the concern of the international community: everyone hoped for a just, lasting and permanent solution to the problem. The Palestinian leadership had made several proposals for a settlement; peace talks were under way as the Committee met. His delegation commended the efforts that were being made and expressed support for all those who were seeking a settlement to protect the rights of the Palestinian people. The most important right was the right to exist and the right to live in peace within one's own territory; the Palestinian people was suffering from several forms of occupation. The Committee should take up all the problems and try to find effective means of protecting the rights of the Palestinian people and bringing an end to occupation.

29. Mr. BASHARMAL (Afghanistan) expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General for the support he had shown for the Committee's work; it was to be hoped that under the Secretary-General's leadership just solutions could be achieved in respect of the question of Palestine and other disputes, including that in Afghanistan.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

30. Mr. CAMILLERI (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the Committee had traditionally taken a leading role in seeking to identify the best way to achieve the objective of securing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It had assumed the role of pioneer of new ideas and promoter of new and imaginative courses of action, and a dramatically changed international political environment presented it with special challenges in that regard. In

(Mr. Camilleri, Malta)

particular, it had to consider the emerging factors and forces characterizing the new international order so as to ensure that the actions and activities it undertook continued to be those best suited to the pursuit of its fundamental objectives.

31. There were a number of positive factors. At its recent session the General Assembly had demonstrated through its adoption by large majorities of resolutions relating to the Committee that the Committee still enjoyed the support of the international community in its determination to advance towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The Committee also derived strength and encouragement from the support of the Secretary-General and from his presence and his inspiring words at the beginning of the current meeting.

32. The Committee would soon need to consider what activities it wished to undertake in 1992 in fulfilling its mandate, in the light of the ongoing peace talks and of current developments in the region, particularly the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory which continued to cause the greatest concern. The programme of work for 1992 would be drafted over the next few weeks for submission to the Committee. In order to facilitate that exercise as well as other future deliberations of the Committee, he suggested that the open-ended working group should be re-established in accordance with past practice.

33. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee approved the Rapporteur's recommendation and decided to re-establish the working group under the chairmanship of Mr. Camilleri (Malta) and the vice-chairmanship of Mr. Jain (India).

34. It was so decided.

UNITED NATIONS ASIAN SEMINAR AND NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, NICOSIA, 20-24 JANUARY 1992

35. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to working paper No. 6/Rev.1 containing the programme for the Seminar and the names of the experts who had agreed to participate in the meeting. The Committee's delegation would consist of: Mr. Camilleri (Malta), Rapporteur, Mr. Mavrommatis (Cyprus), Mr. Jain (India), Mr. Al-Kidwa (Observer for Palestine), and himself, as Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation.

36. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee took note of working paper No. 6/Rev.1.

37. It was so decided.

38. Mr. NASIER (Indonesia) said that the invitation to the Indonesian Government to participate in the Seminar had been submitted to the Indonesian capital; however, his delegation could not confirm that Mr. Amien Rais would be able to attend the Seminar.

The meeting rose at noon.